DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 233 808 PS 013 809

AUTHOR Strom, Mary E.
TITLE Children of Divorce in the Elementary School Classroom.
PUB DATE Aug 83
NOTE 46p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Adjustment (to Environment); Annotated Bibliographies; Counselor Role; *Divorce; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Students; Glossaries; Literature Reviews; School Role; *Self Concept; *Student Behavior; Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

In this document, literature is reviewed concerning (1) effects of divorce on the academic achievement, behavior, and self-concept of elementary school students; and (2) ways the adjustment of children whose parents have divorced can be facilitated in schools by teachers and counselors. Annotations of 40 articles are provided. Also included are a summary of findings, a glossary of terms, conclusions, and recommendations for educational practice. Appended is a list of related books containing entries for both nonreading and reading children. (RH)

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CHILDREN OF DIVORCE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the course E591 -- Exit Project
Indiana University at South Bend
August, 1983

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1980 more than one million children a year have been affected by the divorce of their parents (Brown:537). The divorce rate in America has grown at a tremendous rate, rising nearly 80% between 1970 and 1980 (NAESP Staff Report: 31). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about half of the children born in the United States in 1982 will live in a single parent home at some time during their first 18 years (Allers 1982:68). Today there are nearly 12 million children living in a single-parent home, and if past statistics are any indication, the trend toward a higher divorce rate will continue. According to Black (1979:24), the main reason for the existence of single-parent homes has been separation and divorce.

These alarming statistics have brought into perspective the fact that there are a great number of children in American classrooms who have been affected in some way by divorce, and may be at risk academically or socially (Ourth and Zakariya: 33). Educators have been presented the challenge of becoming more aware of the effects of divorce on these children, and of finding ways to meet their special needs. As Kelly and Wallerstein (1979:52) have stated, "There is no single response to divorce that can be observed in the classroom and, thus, no simple guidelines for recognizing divorce-related behavior and emotional change."

Research has attempted to discover more about the divorcing process, including the effects of divorce on the academic achievement, behavior, and self-concept of the child. Implications for teachers, schools, and counselors have been addressed with regard to methods of facilitating the adjustment of the child to his/her situation.

There has been some discrepancy as to whether or not divorce, in and of itself, causes problems for the child in the classroom (Allers 1982:68). In light of this, educators must be aware of the fact that divorce is not a single entity. Allers (68) stated that it is a process which includes many factors such as the loss of income, the loss of communication between parents and children, and the loss of time with the custodial parent who must now join the work force. One or all of these factors can cause stress on the child, which can in turn put his/her learning at risk.

This study did not attempt to prove that divorce or any one of its factors is a definite cause of learning problems, but rather the divorce process as a whole and its possible effects on the child in the classroom were examined.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Because of the rise in the divorce rate in the United States, many school-age children have been confronted with the loss of one of their parents. Research has indicated that these children may suffer detrimental effects with regard to their ability to perform successfully in the classroom situation. As a result, educators have been faced with the fact that they can no longer ignore the problems of these children, and must make themselves aware of how divorce affects the children in their classrooms, and what can be done to help these children cope with their problems.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine the research regarding the effects of divorce on elementary school children with regard to their academic achievement, behavior, and self-concept. This study also examined ways in which schools, teachers, and counselors could facilitate the adjustment of the child of divorce to his/her situation. Recommendations were given for schools and educators to help them deal more effectively with the special needs of these children. It was hoped that this study would make educators more aware of the problems that could face a child who has experienced divorce, and give educators a better understanding of how to deal with the child and his/her parents more effectively.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The annotations in this study were organized under three main topics.

The effects of divorce on the academic achievement and behaviors of the child were examined in the first section of the study.

The second section dealt with the effects of divorce on the child's self-concept. Although self-concept and self-esteem have slightly different definitions, they were used interchangeably throughout this section.

The final section dealt with helping the child adjust to divorce. This section was sub-divided into three categories: the role of the school, the role of the teacher, and implications for counselors.

There was some overlap with regard to information in the annotations. Often research studies addressed more than one topic such as the effects of divorce on the classroom behavior of the child, and what teachers can do to deal with the child's problems. Where this has occurred, the annotations were categorized according to the section the author addressed in more detail. Both areas, however, were dealt with in the summary. The annotations were alphabetized under subdivisions.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The current research involving the effects of divorce on the self-concept of the elementary school child was limited, and much of the research that was examined did not deal directly with the problem of lower self-concept causing hardships in the classroom. The research available did give some indication as to the overall effects of divorce on the self-concept of the child and was examined accordingly.

GLOSSARY

achievement, academic - "knowledge attained or skills developed in the school subjects, usually designated by test scores or by marks assigned by teachers, or by both," (Good:7).

achiever, high - "a child who achieves high scores on arithmetic, reading, and spelling tests," (Good:7).

concordance - "agreement; harmony," (Webster's New World Dictionary:294).

conjugal family - "a form of family organization in which the typical household consists only of parents and their dependent children," (Good:235).
Synonym: nuclear family

custodial parent - a parent who has custody of his/her child, (Drake:27).

custody - "guardianship," (Webster's New World Dictionary:349).

empathy - "the comprehension of the feelings of others without actually having these feelings; empathic understanding is characterized by intellectual knowledge of another person's concerns rather than an emotional response to those concerns," (Good:210).

I/D/E/A - The Kettering Foundation's Institute for the Development of Educational Activities, (NAESP Staff Report:32).

latchkey children - "children who, whether they have one parent or two, come home from school to an empty house," (Allers:1982:69).

NAESP - National Association of Elementary School Principals ("Participants at the Ditchley Conference":12).

non-custodial parent - a parent who does not have custody of his/her child, (Drake:27).

psychosocial - "of or pertaining to the psychological development of the individual in relation to his social environment," (Webster's New World Dictionary:1147).

self-concept - "the individual's perception of himself as a person, which includes his abilities, appearance, performance in his job, and other phases of daily living," (Good:524).

self-esteem - "the judgement and attitude an individual holds toward himself," (Good:525).

socioeconomic status - "the level indicative of both the social and the economic position of an individual or group," (Good:558).

stereotype - "a fixed standardized conception of the attributes of a class of persons or social values that is not readily modified by evidence of its falsity," (Good: 558).

underachiever - "a person who falls below his/her capacity in school achievement," (Good:628).
Synonym - low achiever

ANNOTATIONS

THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND BEHAVIORS

Allers, Robert D., "Children From Single-Parent Homes," Today's Education 71:68-70, 1982.

Allers reported on the effects that living in a single-parent home have on children, and made suggestions for schools and teachers to educate these children about life, death, and surviving trouble. Allers stated that children in single parent homes often do worse in school because they are faced with stress, brought on by more to deal with at home including the loss of one income, unhappiness that began before the parental separation, and the loss of communication with one and sometimes both parents. Often these children are thrust into premature independence and become "latchkey children" (69). Allers suggested that teachers can help the child's adjustment process by looking for stress symptoms, being a friend, and gearing programs around the child's needs. Schools can schedule conferences and meetings in the evenings, help set up low-cost after school day care, and provide inservices for teachers to give greater insight into the problems of children from single-parent homes. (Robert D. Allers is a psychologist with the Forest Hills Public Schools in Grand Rapids, MI.)

Brown, B. Frank, "A Study of the School Needs of Children From One-Parent Families," Phi Delta Kappan 61:537-540, April, 1980.

In this study, children from one and two-parent families were compared to determine the effects of family status on school achievement, discipline, tardiness, absenteeism, truancy, expulsion, and drop out rate. Low income one and two-parent homes were also compared with average and high income homes, and little if any significant differences were found due to income. Overall results indicated that a substantially higher proportion of high achievers were found to come from two-parent homes, and a high number of low achievers came from one-parent homes. Students from one-parent homes also proved to be tardy more often and have higher incidences of truancy, suspensions, expulsions, drop-outs and discipline problems. Brown suggested that schools should identify students from one-parent homes in order that teachers and counselors might be more aware of their needs, and therefore better able to help the child.

Doering, William G., "Is Life in a One Parent Family Damaging to Children? A Look at Both Sides," ERIC, ED 193 546, March, 1980.

The question of whether or not living in a one-parent family can be damaging to a child was addressed by Doering. He presented both sides of the issue through reviews of current research. The findings suggested that damaging effects to children occurred with regard to academic achievement, behavior problems, females dropping out of high school, and lower I.Q. test scores. Doering cited positive benefits to the child in a one-parent home including after age five, no destructive characteristics can be traced to life in a single parent family; other variables may cause behavior problems and lowered academic achievement; and it is better for a child to grow up happy in a single-parent home than be unhappy in a two-parent home. The author suggested that since there were obvious conflicts in research findings, that each individual child must be examined before his or her situation can be labeled as detrimental or advantageous.

Evans, Al, and Neel, John, "School Behaviors of Children From One-Parent and Two-Parent Homes," Principal 60:38-39, September, 1980.

Evans and Neel conducted a statistical study which analyzed the data from a study by the NAESP-I/D/E/A/ Consortium for the Study of School Needs of Children From One-Parent Families, which dealt with differing behaviors and characteristics of children from one and two-parent homes. Data analyzed included achievement, tardiness, absenteeism, discipline problems, free and reduced price lunches, expulsions and dropouts. Results indicated that at low income levels, there were less differences between children from one and two-parent homes. The school behavior of one-parent children overall, conformed less to the school's expectations than does that of two-parent children. The most significant finding of the study was that on twenty-five of twenty-nine measures of school behavior, children from two-parent homes conformed more closely to school expectations.

"Families in Crisis: What Principals Say," editorial, The National Elementary Principal 59:82-83, October, 1979.

Principals from around the country, representing a good cross section of the profession, responded to a poll with regards to behavioral and academic problems of children whose parents were separated or divorced. 95% of the principals responded that yes, children of divorce showed significant academic and behavioral problems. They included increased aggression or withdrawal, daydreaming, inattention and irritability. Also these students lost interest in schoolwork, and their academic performance became spotty or showed a definite decline. Principals also reported legal problems caused by parental separation and divorce concerning custodial and non-custodial parents. Included were problems concerning release of school records and release of children to non-custodial parents. Principals indicated that many had been involved in programs to alleviate these problems, and suggested that a school or district should have a "parents in conflict" or "special family situation policy" (83), to help them out legally.

Goetting, Ann, "Divorce Outcome Research: Issues and Perspectives," Journal of Family Issues 2:350-378, September, 1981.

Through reviews of research involving divorce and its effects on the adults and children involved, Goetting made an attempt to present all sides of the issues concerning cognitive achievement, personality, health, and delinquency. Results of the studies analyzed showed a contradiction concerning the effects of divorce on school achievement. Some research studies argued that divorce had little or no effect on cognitive achievement, while about an equal amount argued that divorce had negative effects on school success. There were no incidences of delinquency cited among children of divorce, and most research indicated only slight behavior abnormalities, these being problems with boys, and usually occurring during the first year of divorce. Goetting also cited research stating that divorce had less effect on black children than whites. Little significant research was found concerning the effects of divorce on the health of the child.

Hammond, Janice M., "Children of Divorce: A Study of Self-Concept, Academic Achievement, and Attitudes," The Elementary School Journal 80:55-61, November, 1979.

The purpose of Hammond's study was to obtain data on the self-concept, academic achievement, and attitudes of healthy children in their own school settings. Data were collected from an equal number of children in grades 3 through 6 from divorced and intact families, and their teachers. Teachers were asked to complete the Walker Problem Behavior Identification checklist for each child, and provide information on Reading and Math achievement. Children were administered the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale, The Attitude Toward Family Questionnaire, and the Hammond Children of Divorce Questionnaire. No significant differences were found in overall academic achievement, immaturity, withdrawal or peer relations for either group. Boys from divorced families had lower ratings in Math achievement, said their families were less happy, and exhibited slightly more behavior problems than boys from intact families.

Institute for Development of Educational Activities, "The Most Significant Minority: One-Parent Children in the Schools," ERIC, ED 192 438, First Year Report of a Longitudinal Study Conducted by the Consortium for the Study of School Needs of Children from One-Parent Families, 1980.

Children living with only one parent were involved in a study conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Institute for Development of Educational Activities. The study involved 26 schools in 14 states representing a cross section of the country, and the schools were surveyed twice. The authors found that divorce was the most frequent cause of one-parent homes. As a group in both elementary and secondary schools, children from one-parent families showed lower academic achievement and presented more behavior problems than those children from two-parent families. Children from one-parent families also showed higher incidences of absenteeism, truancy, and health problems. It was also found that one-parent families were more likely to be poor than two-parent families. Suggestions were made for teachers and principals to facilitate the adjustment of the children from one-parent homes to the classroom.

Kelly, Joan B., and Wallerstein, Judith S., "Children of Divorce," The National Elementary Principal 59:51-58, October, 1979.

The authors discussed in depth the problems of divorce for children, and the ways in which schools and teachers can provide support. A five year study was conducted of 60 divorcing families with 131 children aged 3-18. It was found that divorce was a major crisis in the life of a child, and caused changes in most children's behavior including daydreaming, lack of concentration, and intense sadness. This in turn caused a significant decline in academic achievement. It was suggested that schools could provide support for these children by providing structure and continuity to their disrupted lives, and through fostering close relationships between the child and teacher. Other support suggestions included teacher awareness and willingness to help, curriculum and attitude changes, and adult educational programs. It was noted that while the schools can and should provide support, the main help to the child's adjustment must come from support provided by both parents.

Moles, Oliver C., "Trends in Divorce and Effects on Children," ERIC, ED 214 630, Paper presented at the meeting of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science, January, 1982.

This study presented a comprehensive picture of the effects of separation and divorce on children. The author discussed current research, and presented three comprehensive reviews of studies dealing with one-parent family households. Also investigated were the reasons for father absence, the role of family conflict, parent-child relations, resources for parents, and social supports. The majority of the studies found that on achievement tests, both boys and girls in one-parent homes scored lower than children from two-parent homes, but were not suffering from any serious intellectual deficit. Also, students from one-parent families were found to be more disruptive, aggressive, immature, and less self-controlled than students from two-parent families. Moles suggested that these findings could have resulted from teacher expectations of negative academic achievement and behavior from one-parent children. Other findings indicated divorce to be the most damaging reason for father absence.

NAESP Staff Report, "One Parent Families and Their Children: The School's Most Significant Minority," Principal 60:31-37, September, 1980.

The authors asserted that many educators assume students coming from one-parent families will have more trouble in school than those from two-parent families. The findings of this study confirmed a definite correlation exists between family status and school performance. The study, conducted with students from one-parent and two-parent families, found that 38% of children from one-parent families were low achievers as compared to 23% from two-parent families. At the other end of the spectrum, it was found that 30% of children from two-parent families were ranked as high achievers, as compared with 17% of one-parent children. It was also found that children from one-parent families are more likely to be absent and truant, and have a higher incidence of discipline problems than those children from two-parent families. The authors stated that the most prevalent cause of one-parent families was divorce.

Riley, Barb, "Education and the Children of One-Parent Families: A Background Paper," ERIC, ED 222 838, 1981.

Riley conducted a review of the research on the effects of divorce and separation on the behavior and achievement of the child. Riley found that the number of one-parent families is on the rise. The high rate of divorce was found to have negative effects on the behavior of the elementary school child. Children at this age often feel helpless and confused by the change in their family structure. They often resort to attention seeking behavior in the classroom to strengthen their sense of security. Riley found that this was often aggressive behavior accompanied by verbal attacks after the parents' separation. The author cited Kelly and Wallerstein (1979) as having found that separation and divorce resulted in increased daydreaming, concentration difficulties, and restlessness, which resulted in a decline in academic achievement from children from one-parent families.

Smidchens, Uldis, and Thompson, Eugene, "Effects of Family Orientation Within Socioeconomic Strata Upon Basic Skill Achievement," ERIC, ED 156 931, Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, December, 1978.

The effects of family organization upon student academic achievement were examined. Special attention was given to teacher expectations and beliefs concerning single parenting and its effects on school achievement. The authors stated that they believe most educators reflect the popular but fading belief that divorce is bad, and that children must suffer detrimental academic effects if their parents don't live together. A public school student population of 1,200 fifth graders were examined using the California Achievement Test to collect data regarding their academic achievement. The authors found that students from two-parent families tended to record higher achievement scores than students from one-parent families. They reasoned, however, that this occurs because of other variables such as higher family prestige and income from most two-parent families. The authors argued that people should use caution in generalizing the results. Teachers shouldn't let their biases affect the students.

Touliatos, John, and Lindholm, Byron W., "Teachers' Perceptions of Behavior Problems in Children From Intact, Single-Parent, and Stepparent Families," Psychology in the Schools 17:264-269, April, 1980.

The authors indicated that who the child is living with can have a significant impact on the child's personality development and mental health. In this study, differences in the occurrence of behavior problems for children living with both natural parents, those living with a single parent, and those from step-parent families were examined. The subjects included students in grades K-8. Data collected included background information, and information from Quay's behavior problems checklist supplied by the teacher. Results indicated children living with mothers only showed problems in the areas of conduct, personality, inadequacy-immaturity, and socialized delinquency. Those from father only families showed more socialized delinquency, and all others showed slight conduct problems. The authors discussed factors contributing to the results such as lower income, and lack of time for mother only families.

Zakariya, Sally Banks, "Another Look at the Children of Divorce: Summary Report of the Study of School Needs of One Parent Children," Principal 62:34-37, September, 1982.

Zakariya responded to the NAESP-I/D/E/A/ study of 1980 which found that one-parent students showed lower achievement and more behavior problems than children from two-parent families. To determine if the original findings were valid, the article cited further studies including one by Barton which found that family income and student sex had a greater impact on achievement than the number of parents in the home. However, when family income and sex of the student were held constant, two-parent children achieved higher than one-parent children. Many negative factors influencing achievement could be found in the one-parent home, so it may not be just single-parentness that causes low achievement. Barton also analyzed parent responses to interviews concerning children's problems and found lower achievement and more absenteeism from one-parent children. The article suggested that overall, children from one-parent homes may be at risk academically. (Sally Banks Zakariya was formerly NAESP director of communications and editor of Principal.)

THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON THE CHILD'S SELF-CONCEPT

Berg, Berthold, and Kelly, Robert, "The Measured Self-Esteem of Children From Broken, Rejected, and Accepted Families," Journal of Divorce 2:363-369, Summer, 1979.

The authors found that various attitudinal and emotional problems caused by divorce, have led to the assumption that children of divorce will suffer from lower self-esteem. The study tested this assumption using as subjects children whose parents had divorced, those from intact but rejected families, and those from intact and accepted families. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was used to measure self-esteem, as well as a 15 item social desirability/defensiveness scale to classify children from intact families as accepting or rejecting. Results indicated children from intact-rejected families had lower self-esteem than those from divorced families and those from intact-accepted families. The self-esteem of children from divorced families was comparable to that of children from intact-accepted families.

Parish, Thomas S., "Concordance of Children's Descriptions of Themselves and Their Parents as a Function of Intact Versus Divorced Families," Journal of Psychology 107: 199-202, March, 1981.

In a follow up to his study with Dostal, Parish examined the Lifshitz model to determine if actual attributes checked in describing one's self were in fact, the same attributes checked in describing either one's mother or father. 606 elementary children completed the Personal Attribute Inventory for Children. Children checked 15 out of 48 adjectives that they considered to be the most like themselves, their mothers, and fathers. According to Parish, "Concordance scores were derived by counting what adjectives were and were not checked in common between self and father and between self and mother." (199) Results indicated that regardless of family status, the concordance scores between self and mother were the highest. That is, children felt they and their mothers had most of the same qualities. The concordance score for self and father diminished after the divorce or remaining parent's remarriage.

Parish, Thomas S., and Dostal, Judy W., "Relationships Between Evaluations of Self and Parents by Children From Intact and Divorced Families," Journal of Psychology 104:35-38, January, 1980.

Drawing on the work of Lifshitz, who "proposed that one's sense of identity, or self concept, develops as a result of a series of successive comparisons between self, father, and mother," (35), the authors conducted a study to find the relationships between evaluation of self and parents from children in divorced and intact families. 639 fifth through eighth graders from 14 schools in Kansas completed the Personal Attribute Inventory for Children, that determined which parent or parents the child identified most often with. Results were that children from intact families had self-concepts that most often identified with both mother and father. Most children from divorced families had self-concepts related to the evaluation of their mothers. The authors stated that it appears that children quickly identify with the remaining parental figure after divorce, possibly to overcome confused feelings toward the absent parent.

Parish, Thomas S., and Nunn, Gerald D., "Children's Self-Concepts and Evaluations of Parents as a Function of Family Structure and Process," Journal of Psychology 107:105-08, January, 1981.

In this study, conducted with families where father loss has occurred through death or divorce, Parish and Nunn examined relationships between children's self-concept and their evaluation of parents. They also considered if the child perceived his/her family situation as happy or unhappy. The subjects included 5th through 8th grade students, 112 from divorced homes, 20 from families where the father had died. The Personal Attribute Inventory was used and included 24 positive and 24 negative descriptors of which the child chose 15 that best described themselves, their mother, father, or stepparent. Findings indicated that the self-concepts of children from happy families were not significantly correlated with the evaluations of mothers, fathers, or stepfathers. Self-concepts of children from unhappy homes were correlated with their evaluations of their mothers, fathers and stepfathers.

Parish, Thomas S., and Philip, Mary K., "The Self-Concepts of Children From Intact and Divorced Families: Can They Be Affected in School Settings?" Education 103:60-62, Fall, 1982.

Parish and Philip stated that it is generally thought that children from divorced families have their various needs met less often, and have lower self-concepts than those children from intact families. In this study, 17 teachers received inservice training with regard to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, then assessed the needs of their students and tried to improve the students' self-concepts. 376 elementary students from both divorced and intact families were the subjects. The authors found that the teachers were far more successful in raising the self-concepts of children from intact families than they were with regards to children from divorced families. The authors concluded that the teachers were limited in their effectiveness because the students from divorced homes had needs that were too special, too great, or possibly outside the realm of the teachers' influence.

Raschke, Helen J., and Raschke, Vernon J., "Family Conflict and Children's Self-Concepts: A Comparison of Intact and Single-Parent Families," Journal of Marriage and the Family 41:367-374, May, 1979.

This study investigated the hypothesis that family conflict, and not family structure, causes a lower self-concept in children. The subjects of the study included 289 third, sixth, and eighth grade students who were given the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. Family conflict was measured by the child's perception of it through a self-report questionnaire. The findings indicated no significant correlation between self-concept and family structure, the structures studied being intact, single-parent, reconstituted, or other types of families. A significant correlation was found between children's self-concept and family conflict regardless if the child came from an intact or single parent home. The findings supported that factors other than family structure have a greater impact on the adjustment of the child.

HELPING THE CHILD ADJUST TO DIVORCE

The Role of the Teacher

Allers, Robert D., "Helping Children Understand Divorce," Today's Education 69:26-29, November-December, 1980.

Allers stated that more than 25% of the children in our country come from families where divorce or separation has occurred. Almost all of these children have undergone stress from the divorce which in one way or another can affect their classroom behavior and performance. According to Allers, some of these signs of stress included absent-mindedness, nervousness, moodiness, withdrawal, declining grades, acting out behavior and physical complaints. Suggestions were made for teachers in order that they might help the child cope with these stresses. These included planning class discussions of divorce which take into account the class age and maturity level; identifying problems; holding parent conferences; talking to the child; keeping literature dealing with divorce available; using special help; and encouraging special programs. Allers warned that teachers should be careful of pitfalls such as indiscreet revelations by pupils and pushing children to talk when they aren't ready.

Annis, David, and Allers, Robert, "Helping the Troubled Child," The National Elementary Principal 59:65, October, 1979.

Annis and Allers stated that we no longer can ignore the fact that many of our children come to school with emotional problems caused by many things, including divorce. These problems are often detectable through behavior changes and lack of academic progress. According to the authors, teachers must be counselors prepared to deal with the child's problems. Suggestions for helping the teacher learn to better help the child included developing basic therapy and empathy skills through inservices conducted by skilled therapists in the community. It was suggested that colleges and universities should increase course offerings in child development and psychology for students going into teaching and school administration.

Flosi, James V., "Children of Divorce," Momentum 11:30-33, October, 1980.

Flosi presented a condensed view of the divorcing process from the viewpoint of the child. The child goes through many periods of adjustment that affects his/her life both at home and at school. It is the job of the educator to do more than merely be aware of the child's situation. According to Flosi, the educator must learn to understand the adjustment process in order to help the students achieve to the best of their ability both academically and socially. Flosi stated that the most important thing a teacher can do is to listen and encourage the student to rely on his or her own strengths and to realize that such a painful ordeal will come to an end, and he/she will survive. Teachers must also be careful not to inflict added guilt on the students or continue the myths about divorce. (Father Flosi is the director of the Chicago Archdiocesan Office of Pastoral Care for Separated and Divorced Catholics.)

Levine, Elinor, "What Teachers Expect of Children From Single-Parent Families," ERIC, ED 219 692, Scientific Research Society of North America, March, 1982.

This study discussed the possibility that children from one-parent homes suffer discrimination with regards to school policies and teacher attitudes and expectations of their academic and psycho-social performance. Parents' perceptions of teacher attitudes toward their children were also addressed. 100 teachers from a predominately white, middle class town were sampled through a questionnaire made up by the researcher. The results indicated that most teachers had lower psycho-social and academic expectations for children from single-parent families. Parents, overall, perceived that teachers would have lower expectations of children from one-parent families. According to Levine, this can be detrimental to the child, as the findings of this study implied that teachers' negative expectations of pupil performance can cause that negative performance.

Parker, Patricia, "How to Deal With the Single-Parent Child in the Classroom," Teacher 80:51-54, September, 1980.

According to Parker, "the stereotypic (nuclear) family - mother, father, sister, brother, and dog - no longer exists for about 20% of American school children, a percentage that has doubled since 1960." (51) Divorce is the most common reason for one-parent homes. Parker quoted a number of researchers who have found that the best way to deal with a child from a one-parent home is to be aware of the family situation, and be understanding and a good listener. Although some research has shown that children's reactions to divorce can include misbehavior, social withdrawal, and crying easily, teachers should not expect these behaviors from all children of divorce, as their expectations are often self-fulfilling. Parker stated that teachers should be sensitive to the needs of their students, and realize that though they may come from one-parent families, they are families none-the-less. (Parker is a writer who specializes in Education.)

Skeen, Patsy, and McKenry, Patrick C., "The Teacher's Role in Facilitating a Child's Adjustment to Divorce," Young Children 35:3-14, July, 1980.

The purpose of this article was to provide helpful information for teachers that would enable them to be a positive support to children and families during divorce. Research concerning the effects of divorce on children and the role of the school was summarized. Some of the findings indicated that divorce sometimes has a positive affect on children because they show greater independence and are no longer involved in a destructive family situation. Most of the research cited tends to agree, however, that divorce has negative effects on the child's self-concept, behavior, and general emotional development. Teachers play a major role in helping the child cope with divorce because they are often the central stable figure in the life of the child. Suggestions for the teacher included being a careful observer, provide opportunities for working through feelings, remain consistent in expectations (but avoid negative ones), love the child, and work with the parents.

The Role of the School

Black, Kathryn Norcross, "What About the Child From a One-Parent Home?" Teacher 96:24-26, 28, January, 1979.

Black noted that most of the increase in one-parent homes is due to divorce and separation. As a result schools have looked at divorce as a major cause of decline in academic achievement. Black stated that the research on school achievement by children in one-parent homes is contradictory, and that possibly the best way to determine the effects of divorce on achievement would be to have the schools who do regular achievement testing use information they already have in their student files to determine if divorce is associated with a change in achievement. The article stated that divorce does result in psychological distress which can affect the behavior of the child. Black suggested the most important thing educators can do to help children of divorce, is to help their parents function well, by being sympathetic to the parents' needs and suggesting books, organizations and so on that could help the parents adjust to their situation and manage their homes and children in a more organized manner. (Kathryn Norcross Black is a developmental psychologist in the Department of Psychological Sciences at Purdue University in West Lafayette, IN.)

Damon, Parker, "When the Family Comes Apart: What Schools Can Do," The National Elementary Principal 59:66-75, October, 1979.

The focus of this article was on the feelings children encounter when their family comes apart, and what schools can do to help these children. Damon stated that although not all children seem to manifest problems caused by divorce, most of them are at a greater risk of encountering such problems as lack of progress in school, behavior problems including anxiety, and problems adjusting to their new family situations. Damon suggested that a non-offensive poll of the community to gain more information on family status and their school needs would be helpful. Accurate records should be kept, and permanent teacher mentors could keep track of these students throughout their school years, in order to better understand them and attend to their needs. It was suggested that parents and faculties work together through discussion groups, self-help networks, and "awareness workshops" (74) to focus attention on issues concerning divorce. (Parker Damon is principal of McCarthy-Towne School in Acton, MA, and was a participant at the Anglo-American Conference on One-Parent Families held at Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire, in March, 1979.)

Drake, Ellen A., "Children of Separation and Divorce: School Policies, Procedures, Problems," Phi Delta Kappan 63:27-28, September, 1981.

Drake clarified ten major issues affecting children of divorce with which the school administrator must contend. These included many legal issues involving the custodial and non-custodial parent, their rights, and the rights of the school. Drake argued that parental separation and divorce often cause problems for the school administrator because parents in conflict do not always act in their child's best interests, and it may be up to the school to do so. Suggestions were made for the school administrator to deal with these problems, which included helping staff members become aware of the special needs of these young people, working with the school district to formulate policies for special family situations that find parents in conflict, and compiling information on the number of children from the district who come from divorced and separated families. (Ellen A. Drake is a licensed psychologist in private practice in Kendall Park, NJ. She is also a field supervisor for the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Rutgers University.)

Drake, Ellen A., "Helping the School Cope With Children of Divorce," Journal of Divorce 3:69-75, Fall, 1979.

Drake argued that school age children are a "population at risk" (69) and may exhibit behaviors at school that they don't exhibit at home. It therefore becomes the job of the school to become aware of these problems and to try to solve them to the best of their ability. Drake suggested that a divorce specific assessment be used to give the school a brief history of the child and his/her attitude and responses to the divorce. Direct and indirect intervention strategies can then be used to help the child. Direct intervention strategies discussed included work with psychologists or other social workers to counsel students and parents. Indirect strategies included consultation activities to help school personnel increase their knowledge and become more sensitive to the problems of these children, and provide ideas for teachers to use in the classroom setting.

Excerpts From the Ditchley Proceedings: "A Response to Robert Weiss," National Elementary Principal 59:27-30, October, 1979.

During the Ditchley proceedings, responses were made to Robert Weiss by various researchers in the field of divorce, concerning divorce and its effects on parents and children. Also discussed were ways in which the schools can help. It was stated that children of divorce have a greater opportunity for self-direction which may or may not cause problems. Often children see the father as the authority figure and when he leaves home children have a difficult time obeying their mother. It was suggested that community support systems be set up to help these families. Also, schools need to be more sensitive and not carry negative expectations for students from one-parent homes. Brammell stated that the school needs to be more understanding and make allowances for the needs of these children, especially providing opportunity for counseling, not forcing it upon the child. (The Ditchley Conference was an Anglo-American Conference on One-Parent Families held in Oxfordshire, England in March, 1979.)

Excerpts from the Ditchley Proceedings: "Public Policy Considerations," National Elementary Principal 59: 59-64, October, 1979.

Again during the Ditchley proceedings, experts in the field of divorce discussed the ways in which schools and governments could help the families of divorce. Wallerstein stated that teachers don't fully understand all of the problems facing children from divorced families, and often think of children who are daydreaming as lazy rather than troubled and worried. Schools need to help teachers understand these problems. It was also suggested that having more male teachers in the elementary school would give the children of divorce a necessary male model. Public policy regarding financial help for separated families was discussed, and it was suggested that if something be done to lessen the economic hardships of separated and divorced families, such as tax credits and children's allowances, there would be less stress on the parents and children.

Ourth, John, "Children in One-Parent Homes: The School Factor," Principal 60:40, September, 1980.

Ourth argued that the school, while already overburdened, nonetheless has the responsibility of meeting the needs of all the children, including those from one-parent homes. The school can be a welcome support system and a source of continuity for the family to fall back on when the going gets tough. Ourth suggested that the most important thing the schools can do to help the adjustment of the child to living in a one-parent family is to re-examine our own attitudes and how they come across to the children in our care. Teachers should not expect the worst from children in divorced homes, or attach a stigma to the situation or label the child. Teachers should be sensitive to the signs which signal confusion and stress in the child, and recognize the child's new-found independence that may develop when they learn to cope with that situation. (John Ourth is an elementary principal, and president of NAESP.)

Ourth, John, and Zakariya, Sally Banks, "The School and the Single-Parent Student: What Schools Can Do To Help," Principal 62:24-26, 31-33, 38, September, 1982.

The authors stated that schools must play an important part in helping the student adjust to the death, divorce, or separation of parents, because these situations trouble the child and puts his/her learning at risk. Many solutions the schools can implement were suggested, first dealing with keeping accurate records on the children and being aware of the legalities concerning custodial and non-custodial parents and parental kidnapping. Staff inservices were suggested to help teachers deal with negative expectations for children of divorce and to review curriculum materials that may discriminate against the single-parent child. Also suggested were ways the school could help the single parents such as scheduling school events during non-working hours, arranging for child care during school activities, offering extended day programs, helping with homework, and setting up a parent resource center.

Implications for Counselors

Bowker, Marjorie A., "Children and Divorce: Being in Between," Elementary School Guidance and Counseling 17:126-130, December, 1982.

This article detailed the workings of an in-school support group of children from divorced families who were referred because of poor academic achievement, change in behavior, or parental request. The group's short term goals were to provide support through meetings of same age, same sex students where feelings and ways of coping were discussed, and trust mechanisms increased. Long term goals of the support group included improving behavior and academic achievement, with the major focus on the production of a filmstrip which told the story of separation and divorce from the child's point of view. According to Bowker, production of the filmstrip was an excellent counseling technique, because it enabled students in the group to examine and express their feelings about being a child from a divorced family. Production of the filmstrip caused the children's self-esteem to rise greatly, and gave the children a sense that they could do something about their parents' divorce. It also opened up lines of communication between parents and children. (Marjorie Bowker is an elementary school counselor in the Quincy Public Schools, Quincy, MA.)

Cook, Alicia S., and McBride, Jean, "Divorce: Helping Children Cope," The School Counselor 30:89-94, November, 1982.

According to the authors, crisis events place stress on individuals that exceed their ability to handle them with normal resources. Divorce is just such an event. As children are all different, they react to divorce in different ways. Various methods have been utilized to help them cope. The authors suggested that the school counselor help the parents understand the importance of their children's reactions, and reassure them that most of these reactions are not abnormal. A supportive atmosphere where children and parents can share their grief appropriately was suggested. This article also noted that teachers play an important role in helping the child cope with divorce. Teachers must be tolerant, but not overprotective when dealing with the child. Classroom activities should be provided which allow for recognition and expression of emotions. Finally, it was suggested that school counselors should make themselves available to listen to children, and initiate school based support groups where children of divorce can express their anger and fears. (Alicia S. Cook is associate professor and Jean McBride ia a graduate student in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Colorado State University, Fort Collins.)

Drake, Ellen A., and Shellenberger, Sylvie, "Children of Separation and Divorce: A Review of School Programs and Implications for the Psychologist," School Psychology Review 10:54-61, Winter, 1981.

The authors asserted that school psychologists play an important role in facilitating the adjustment of children to their parent's divorce by defining problems and making recommendations to teachers and parents. They can also employ direct, indirect, or preventative measures to help students cope. Direct approaches cited included counseling groups composed of children from single-parent homes, and a structured group approach where students were educated on how to successfully deal with crisis situations. Training programs for teachers and other school personnel to promote understanding of the children's needs because of divorce and provide factual information regarding the effects of divorce on children, were indirect approaches discussed. Preventative approaches for the psychologist to implement included a program to help children from both one and two parent families learn to deal with any possible family changes which may cause stress.

Hammond, Janice M., "Children of Divorce: Implications for Counselors," School Counselor 27:7-13, September, 1979.

Hammond again reported on her study which found no significant differences between the self-concepts, academic achievement, and behaviors of children from divorced and intact families. The study also addressed the students' attitudes and suggestions for school counselors to help children and parents through the period of adjustment that comes with divorce. Through this study, children of divorce indicated that the school counselor would be the person they would talk to the most often. They recommended that counselors could be helpful by asking students to talk about how they feel, individually or in group sessions, and by supplying students with books to read about divorce. Hammond also found that children felt counselors could talk to their parents and initiate and lead communication and parenting skill workshops that would make the parents more aware of the child's need for attention and caring during the difficult period of divorce.

Sonnenshein-Schneider, Mary, and Baird, Kay L., "Group Counseling Children of Divorce in the Elementary Schools: Understanding Process and Technique," The Personnel and Guidance Journal 59:88-91, October, 1980.

This article focused on the processes and techniques of group counseling for children of divorce in the schools. It was the authors' purpose to aid the counselor who wishes to implement a divorce counseling group in the school. Such groups generally serve to vent children's feelings and offer peer support in the natural school setting, with the outcome being individuals who are capable of handling their problems both at home and at school. Group formation was discussed, with details including parental permission, time limits, and group membership requirements. Techniques discussed included those relating to Piaget's Concrete Operational Stage, such as brainstorming, role playing, slides, and puppets. The authors warned counselors to have realistic expectations, as the group is not designed to "save" the child, but rather to help them cope. (Mary Sonnenshein-Schneider is a professor in the graduate school of the National College of Education, Evanston, IL. Kay L. Baird is a school social worker in Chicago.)

SUMMARY

Kelly and Wallerstein stated that divorce was a major crisis in the life of a child, and caused changes in most children's behavior including daydreaming, lack of concentration, and intense sadness, all of which led to a significant decline in academic achievement.

According to studies conducted by Brown, Touliatos and Lindholm, and the NAESP Staff Report, children of divorce showed lower academic achievement than those children from intact families. They also exhibited more behavior problems and had higher incidences of absenteeism, truancy, suspensions, expulsions, and dropped out of school more often than children from intact families. Smidchens and Thompson found that children from one-parent families recorded lower scores on achievement tests than those children from two-parent families, but indicated that the reasons for this were problems stemming from family organization and negative teacher expectations, rather than any serious intellectual deficiency.

Zakariya re-examined the findings of the NAESP staff report study, and cited follow-up research conducted by Barton who found that when family income and sex were held constant, two-parent children achieved higher than one-parent children. Zakariya concluded that the evidence from both studies suggests that as a whole, children of divorce may be at risk academically, but it is important that teachers not use the findings to label

these children, but rather as an indicator that further research is necessary.

Doering, Goetting, Moles, and Riley conducted reviews of current research and found that divorce can have negative effects on the behavior of the elementary school child. Riley noted that these children often resort to attention seeking behavior to strengthen their sense of security. Moles indicated that while children from one-parent homes scored lower on achievement tests than children from two-parent homes, they were not suffering from any serious intellectual deficit.

Doering and Goetting also reviewed research dealing with the positive aspects of divorce for the child, and found that after age five, no destructive characteristics could be traced to life in a one-parent family, and that it was better for a child to grow up happy in a single-parent home, than unhappy in a conflict ridden two-parent home. They also reviewed research which found fewer incidences of behavior problems, and little if any lack of academic achievement from children of divorced families. Hammond's study also found no significant differences in overall academic achievement, self-concept, or behavior, between children from divorced and intact homes. Boys from divorced homes did have lower ratings in math achievement, and stated that their families were less happy than did boys from intact families.

Allers' article summed up the majority of the findings dealing with the effects of divorce on the academic achievement and behavior of the child. He stated that these children often do worse in school because of the stress brought on by all of the factors included in the divorcing process such as loss of income, and loss of communication with one, and sometimes both parents.

Research studies dealing with the effects of divorce on the child's self-concept were limited, and varied as to the kinds of information provided about the child's self-concept. Parish led research which found that children from intact families had self-concepts that most often identified with their evaluations of both the mother and father. Most children from divorced families had self-concepts that related to their evaluation of their mothers. Parish also found that regardless of family status, children felt they had qualities most like those of their mothers, and those children from unhappy homes had self-concepts correlated with their evaluations of their mothers, fathers, and stepfathers. Parish stated that when teachers tried to meet the needs of children in their classrooms from divorced and intact families, and raise the self-concept of these children, they were less successful with the children from divorced families. Berg and Kelly, and Raschke and Raschke found that family conflict and not family status caused a lower self-concept in children.

The educational system plays an important role in helping the child of divorce deal with his/her problems. In this study, articles were examined which made suggestions for schools, teachers, and counselors to help the child of divorce and his/her parents.

Damon, Drake, Ourth and Zakariya all concurred that divorce puts the child's learning at risk, and that schools must first become aware of this problem if they are to help the child. Some of the suggestions they offered included keeping accurate records on each child in order to be aware of any change in family status. Also, inservices and consultation activities could be conducted in order to help school personnel become more sensitive to the needs of children from divorced families. Ourth argued that the schools can be a welcome support system for the family to fall back on in times of trouble, and suggested that the most important thing the schools can do to help the adjustment of the child is to have educators re-examine their attitudes and expectations regarding children from divorced homes. Black suggested that schools be sensitive to the parents' needs as well as to those of the child by suggesting books, organizations, and so on that could help the parents cope.

Drake discussed legal implications for the school regarding custodial and non-custodial parents and made suggestions for school administrators to deal with these problems, including forming policies for special family situations that find parents in conflict.

The ways in which the government could help families going through a divorce were discussed during the Ditchley proceedings, and it was suggested that something should be done to ease the economic hardships on these families. This will in turn relieve some of the stress that is causing problems for the children and parents. It was also suggested that community support systems be set up to help these families deal with their problems.

According to Skeen and McKenry, teachers play a major role in facilitating the adjustment of the child of divorce to his/her situation, because they are often the central stable figure in the life of a child. Skeen and McKenry, along with Flosi and Parker suggested that it is extremely important for teachers to be observant, and be careful listeners. Annis and Allers suggested that inservices could help teachers develop basic therapy and empathy skills which could be of use in talking through problems with children of divorce, both one on one, and through in class discussions. Allers and others also stated that teachers should encourage special programs, use special help when necessary, hold parent conferences to discuss the child's problems, and keep literature dealing with divorce available (See Appendix A).

Levine conducted a study which found that teachers had lower psychosocial and academic expectations for children from single-parent families. Parker, and Skeen and McKenry also

discussed this issue and stated that often negative expectations on the part of the teacher are self-fulfilling. It was suggested that teachers be aware of their own bias regarding divorce, in order that they might get rid of any negative expectations toward children from divorced families, as these can be detrimental toward the child.

Hammond and others suggested peer group counseling sessions to help children of divorce express their feeling and emotions. School counselors could lead these support groups and employ various techniques such as those suggested by Bowker which included the production of a filmstrip which told the story of divorce from the child's point of view. Baird and Sonnenshein-Schneider suggested concrete activities such as brainstorming, role playing, and the use of puppets, as methods of helping the child work through his/her problems.

CONCLUSION

Although the data concerning the effects of divorce on the academic achievement and behaviors of the child were contradictory, a greater number of studies found that children who have experienced the divorce of their parents showed lower academic achievement, and exhibited more behavior problems than those children from intact families. It was concluded from studies conducted by Brown and others, that divorce does have negative effects on the academic and social behavior of the child in the elementary classroom. Although it cannot be concluded that this will hold true for each individual child, it is evident from the research studied that, as a group, children of divorce are at risk both academically and socially.

It was obvious from examining the research dealing with the effects of divorce on the self-concept of the child, that this is one area in which more research should be conducted, as there are few generalizations that can be made from the limited data available. However, Parish conducted a number of studies which found that children most often base their own self-concepts on their evaluations of their custodial parent. It can be concluded that if a child identifies with the parent he/she is living with, the relationship with the non-custodial parent will suffer. This could cause additional stress on the child, which could in turn affect his/her school behavior.

From studies conducted by Raschke and Raschke, and others, it was found that living in a conflict ridden intact home could lower a child's self-concept more than living in a divorced home. This fact has shown that although children experiencing divorce are under stress and show an increase in problem behavior, it can be just as damaging to a child to live in a conflict ridden intact home.

Despite the conclusions drawn with regard to the effects of divorce on the academic achievement and behavior of the child in the classroom, teachers should not hold negative expectations for children experiencing divorce. Teachers must remember that each child is an individual, and while some may show negative behavior, others will react to divorce in a completely acceptable manner. As Parker stated, teachers' negative expectations can often be self-fulfilling. Teachers must be sensitive to the needs of these children and offer the opportunities and materials for the child to work through his/her problems.

From the research studied, schools and counselors must become aware of the many problems that confront children of divorce, and be sensitive to their special needs and the needs of their parents. Schools and counselors can provide necessary support to these families through group counseling for parents and children, convenient scheduling of school functions, keeping accurate records, and keeping the lines of communication open between parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Inservices be held to help teachers and other school personnel learn more about the effects of divorce on the child in the classroom, and suggest ways to help them deal with the special needs of these children.
2. Teachers provide opportunities and materials for the child to work through his/her problems. Included would be books about divorce the child could read and relate to. (See Appendix A)
3. Peer counseling groups be set up to help children of divorce cope with their feelings and emotions.
4. Teachers hold regular conferences with parents to discuss the child's progress, and any problems that might occur because of the divorce situation.
5. Schools form policies regarding the legalities involved in dealing with non-custodial parents.
6. School functions be conveniently scheduled so that those parents who work may attend.
7. Extended day programs should be offered in all schools, if possible, in order to provide a safe, constructive alternative for the growing number of children who must go home to an empty house.

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APPENDIX A

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Books for Children

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